

Again in a letter dated 9th July 1918, she writes 'I so seldom get into touch with Feda except when I am writing to you. It is very strange, but I expect there may be a band working for some particular object on the other side, and Feda is trying to help.'

That the two of them *did* help, hundreds of people could testify.

We know so very little about what we really are in any case. In dreams we often seem to fish in a mutual pool and catch bits of each other.

On 29th November 1959 I had an extraordinary dream, carefully noted at once, which did not seem to be for me, but for Gladys, and it gave me a feeling she was not well, so I sent her the dream.

In her enthusiastic reply, she recognized the people in the dream—total strangers to me, and she explained it all and regarded it as a message and warning to her from a friend and healer who had greatly helped her keep well, while he was on earth and whose advice she had been neglecting of late and so had had an attack of vertigo.

It is a very interesting letter but would take up too much space to include here in full, but I would like to end with her own view of what her work had done for her, with which she ends this letter—'How thankful I am that I was allowed and helped to do that work, above all others. Zoë, it brought me so much comfort and peace too.' And I know exactly what she means. She was 77½ when she wrote that letter on 1st December 1959.

MR HASTINGS AND THE BORLEY REPORT

by E. J. DINGWALL, K. M. GOLDNEY and
T. H. HALL

IN Part 201 of the *Proceedings* (March 1969) Mr Hastings contributed a hundred-page article complaining of the methods adopted by the three authors of *HBR*,¹ published thirteen years ago (*Proc.* 1956, 51, Pt. 186).

It appears from the contents of this paper that after some years of cogitation Mr Hastings does not find himself in agreement with the great majority of the reviewers of this report when it first appeared. We regret that this be so and would have even greater cause for regret had Mr Hastings produced any sound and solid

¹ In this reply the abbreviations are as stated in Mr Hastings' paper (p. 67).

reasons for his views, instead of presenting to his readers a mass of surmises, interpretations differing from our own and suggestions that our work was prejudiced, one-sided, misleading and hostile in its attitude to Harry Price.

Although it is clear that Mr Hastings has gone through our book line by line to discover errors of *fact*, he has, we think, not been very successful. Indeed, these attempts on his part to discover errors in *HBR* have led him to be so careless in his own statements that in the very first line of his Introduction he shows that he does not know in which county Borley Rectory was situated. It may be of interest to the reader if we mention a few facts regarding another statement made by Mr Hastings in his Introduction. He asserts that Price's writings and papers were deposited in the University of London during his lifetime where they could be consulted by researchers and that he took pains to see that these papers were 'conveniently arranged'. They were far from being conveniently arranged and the Librarian Mr Wesencraft noted the 'extraordinary ragged and tattered condition of the envelopes': when two of the authors examined some of them later they found them in a chaotic condition. This statement that Price's Borley papers were on deposit at the University of London and could have been consulted during his lifetime is a surprising oversimplification of the more complex situation which actually existed. The Harry Price Library was given to the University in November 1937 and presumably included Mr Foyster's *Diary of Occurrences* and the comparatively few papers relating to Price's early visits to Borley in 1929 and 1931. The main mass of Borley papers, however, did not begin even to exist until 1938 and until after the end of the 'Price tenancy', followed by Mr Sidney Glanville's preparation of the Locked Book which Price used in writing *MHH*. When it is recalled that Price had no office in London from the outbreak of war, and that *MHH*, published in October 1940, was written in Pulborough with the Borley papers necessarily at hand, it is clear that no significant quantity of documents relating to Borley could have been deposited at London University Library before the Harry Price Library was closed down for the duration of the war. From 1939 to 1945, therefore, these papers were unavailable for study, despite Price's misleading statement in *MHH* in 1940, upon which Mr Hastings has relied.

Since Price had no office in London after October 1939 it is proper to suppose that in 1945 he was engaged at his home in Pulborough in the writing of *EBR*, published in 1946. The most casual reference to this volume makes it clear that it consists in large part of the quotation of a mass of correspondence and could

not have been written without the Borley file at hand. After the publication of *EBR* Price commenced writing, at his house, a third book on Borley, which was unfinished at the time of his death in 1948. The papers then passed to the Midland Bank Executor and Trustee Company. This short account of the whereabouts of the Borley file, as distinct from the Harry Price Library (a distinction which Mr Hastings (p. 78) and to a lesser extent Mr Wesencraft's letter have failed to make) has been confirmed by Mr Wesencraft, who in a letter to one of us dated 6th June, 1968 also stated that he saw the Borley file for the first time in 1956.

Mr Hastings has, however, discovered a few errors to which we are very willing to plead guilty. For example on p. 135 quoting *HBR*, p. 19, he says that we give the impression that it was Miss *Ethel* Bull who in 1900 saw the nun and noticed that 'she had an expression of intense grief on her face' whereas Mr Hastings rightly states that it was Miss *Elsie* Bull who on that occasion described the face of the nun in these words. In *MHH*, p. 45, it is merely stated that the Misses Ethel, Freda and Mabel Bull noticed that the nun 'looked intensely sad and ill'.

Again, Mr Hastings on p. 133 of his paper shows himself very dissatisfied with the evidence concerning the flying brick and charges us with 'subtly' inflating our account and interpretation by a false quotation. We again regret that through our own or another's error the final quotation mark after the words 'The Last Phenomenon?' should have been before the question mark and not after it.

Two more cases which illustrate the kind of accusation Mr Hastings brings against the authors on factual matters will suffice. On p. 142 he states that our account (*HBR*, p. 131) of the visit of Mr Glanville and his brother-in-law to the cats' cemetery is no more reliable than one of Price's reports. In order to convict us of unreliability he states that we said 'it was during this same visit' [August 14-15, 1937] that Mr Glanville and his brother-in-law investigated a disturbance at the cats' cemetery, which was untrue since the investigation was not made till a fortnight later. Perhaps Mr Hastings will take the trouble to read what the authors said. They did *not* say this: they said that 'Mr. Glanville and his brother-in-law noticed that the cats' cemetery had been disturbed'. The authors gave no date for the 'renewed excavations' since Price had already stated it in *MHH*, p. 199.

Another instance where Mr Hastings believes he has convicted the authors of an error concerns the photograph of the medal (Plate II (C), *HBR*, p. 98). He accuses us (p. 109) of glossing

over a difficulty by the introduction of what he thinks is a 'fictitious quotation' and 'in no less than two respects this description is false'. He states that Price claimed that this medal was found on 27th June, whereas we say it was 5th July. Further, he maintains that we were wrong in putting quotation marks round the words 'French Roman Catholic Confirmation medal', since the words were never used by Price in *MHH*. To this we reply that the words between quotes are not intended to be a *quotation*: they constitute merely a descriptive label to be used by readers to enable them more easily to identify the medals. As to the date, 5th July, said to be false by Mr Hastings, our date, we consider, is correct (see *HBR*, p. 62). It was Price who made a mistake in this instance, which is of small importance. We therefore gave the correct date without indicating this minor error on Price's part. We may perhaps add that Mr Hastings is in error when he states that the description is to be found in *MHH*, p. 61.

The method adopted by Mr Hastings in his paper is very simple. It is to select from the vast mass of testimony collected in *HBR* those incidents in which he thinks that another interpretation is possible and he then proceeds to write page after page of suppositions and assumptions to support his view. For example, much space is devoted to trying to discredit Mr Sutton's testimony and perhaps we ought to pay some attention to this matter. As will be remembered, he is one of the most important witnesses we quoted. It was he who accompanied Price to Borley, accused him of fraudulently producing phenomena and later printed his story in the *Inky Way Annual* (see *HBR*, pp. 31 ff.). In order to discredit Mr Sutton, Mr Hastings devotes some twenty-five pages to his testimony, although it does not seem to have struck him as at all curious that Price himself never mentioned Sutton's visit to Borley in either *MHH* or *EBR*. Sutton was interviewed and numbers of detailed questions were put to him, such as whether he actually put a hand in *each* of Price's pockets, or did he hold his wrist with one hand while putting the other hand into just one pocket. It is details like these that the interviewer apparently expected Mr Sutton to remember accurately thirty-seven years after the events occurred.

Although we do not know if Mr Sutton made any notes in 1929 when he was at Borley, we are inclined to prefer his memory of 1948 to that of twenty years later. What has apparently most troubled Mr Hastings and the Editor Dr Alan Gauld are the questions as to whether or not Mr Sutton *saw* Price throw a stone and whether he could have been mistaken in thinking that what he felt in Price's pockets was something else. Dr Gauld states

(p. 160) that Mr Sutton told him in 1966 that he did not actually *see* Price throw the half brick. But in 1949 Lord Charles Hope stated that Miss Kaye had told him that Mr Sutton said he saw Price throw a large stone and on interviewing Mr Sutton the latter confirmed it. We may be wrong, but we prefer to think that Mr Sutton's memory may have been better then than now, and we would remind readers that Mr Sutton both saw and approved all references to himself in *HBR*, a fact which Mr Hastings has not mentioned.

Dr Gauld further questioned Mr Sutton as to whether he had been sure that what he felt in Price's pockets were actually stones. Mr Sutton, however, replied that it was absolutely clear to him that he brought some stones out of Price's pockets.

Before leaving the case of Mr Sutton it may be pertinent to consider some of his statements which he made to the Society for Psychical Research in 1950 and which Mr Hastings has printed in his examination of our report. It is here that Mr Sutton candidly admits that, having had some experience with Price, he had no faith in him as a serious investigator and consequently when going to Borley 'was prepared for all kinds of phenomena'. In 1966 he was even more explicit. He told Dr Gauld that he had always felt that he and Price had a tacit understanding that both knew the phenomena to be fraudulent and both wanted a good story out of them. It might have been, he thought, that Price perpetrated the fraud 'almost out of kindness' so that he would not leave Borley copyless.

Other reporters seem to have felt as Mr Sutton did. For example, one of them reviewing *HBR* and the suggestion that Price faked phenomena wrote 'I knew Harry well and I would not have put it past him'. Even *before HBR* was published some had their doubts. In one case a widely-known freelance journalist wrote to one of the authors saying that in 1955 he had talked to Edward Cooper who had been quoted by Price (*MHH*, p. 55) as having seen the phantom coach. From what Cooper told him he realized that Price 'either accidentally or deliberately' had 'completely twisted' Cooper's account of the coach so that it approached from precisely the opposite direction. He concluded his letter by drawing attention to the fact that we did not mention this in our inquiry and later expressed his view that it was evident that 'item by item the legend dissolved, for it became clear that Price was unarguably guilty of embroidery, jiggery-pokery and manipulating the reports of his amateur observers'.

In his paper Mr Hastings has devoted a whole chapter to the testimony of Mrs Smith, but we cannot say that he has been very

successful in his attempts to discredit what we wrote about her. Indeed, the reader of Mr Hastings' report might almost think that we had neglected many items of her testimony which we were at pains both to print and to try to explain. We did our best, we think, to point out and interpret what she said she had experienced and felt at various times during the Smith incumbency and finally left it to our readers to come to their own conclusions. Mr Hastings accuses us (p. 98) of 'conveniently omitting' certain words in a quotation, which implied that Mr Smith believed in the haunting. Yet in *HBR* (pp. 51-2) we printed no less than seven letters implying Mr Smith's belief and other letters to the same effect on pp. 53-5. We never made any attempt to *conceal* these facts: what we did was to attempt to *explain* them. Moreover, Mr Hastings has seen fit to omit the important letter to Price from Mr Smith in 1939 in which he said that his testimony was not for publication and wrote 'Mrs. Smith and I would rather be left out of it . . . we really did not believe there were any such things as ghosts' (*HBR*, p. 55). As Sir Arnold Lunn said in 1956, 'The authors of this report have been scrupulously honest in reporting not only evidence which tells in favour of their main thesis but also evidence which weakens the effects of witnesses who agree with their verdict on Price. Thus they record facts which weaken Mrs. Smith's evidence against Price'. We ourselves are quite content to leave it at that, although we might perhaps add that in a number of other instances we printed and emphasized statements in Price's favour, as, for example, Mrs Meeker's testimony (*HBR*, p. 32).

Mr Hastings frequently complains that the authors have omitted this and that, suggesting that they have done so with the purpose of concealing facts which might, if recorded, weaken their case against Price. He himself, however, does not seem to be entirely guiltless in this respect. For example, he makes much of Mrs Meeker's letter of 21st March, 1949 (which, incidentally, he does not copy correctly) in which she denied having any recollection of the stone-throwing episode recorded by Mr Sutton. But also in the same letter Mrs Meeker made the astonishing assertion that, had Sutton really been in the position he said he was in on that night, was she expected to believe that he made nothing of it? This passage would have somewhat weakened Mrs Meeker's claim to be a good witness, since it was she herself who drove Mr Sutton to the nearby village of Long Melford to telephone the story to the News Editor of the *Daily Mail* (*HBR*, p. 31).

In dealing with the Foyster material it is asserted (pp. 137-8) that Mr Foyster kept 'original records covering the whole period'

of his incumbency (October 1930–October 1935), and this hypothetical document is referred to by Mr Hastings as 'Writing A'. Mr Hastings complains that we have entirely ignored the existence of 'Writing A' in our examination of Mr Foyster's testimony, although conceding that this document is not in the Harry Price Library and that its existence can only be inferred.

In *HBR* (pp. 82–4) we tried to deal with the facts. We described with some precision Mr Foyster's three accounts, and stated that in our opinion the *Diary of Occurrences*, written, according to Mr Foyster's own statement, early in 1931, was his first attempt to record the events at Borley. Mr Hastings refers to this as 'Writing B'. It is difficult to believe that if when writing the *Diary of Occurrences* Mr Foyster had the alleged earlier 'Writing A' available, he could have used the words quoted on pp. 82–3 of *HBR*, 'I think it is desirable that a record of our experiences should be preserved' and 'I cannot remember the exact date but we had not been in the house very long before Marianne began seeing Harry Bull' and 'Now I come to definite dates and the most extraordinary part of our experience'. These observations by Mr Foyster do not seem to us to form an acceptable basis for an assumption of the existence of a previous account, which apparently was never seen by Price or any other investigator.

Another example of Mr Hastings' methods of dealing with material, the facts concerning which his readers might not be likely to know, is where he attempts to excuse an error in *EBR* (1946) to which Mr Whitehouse drew attention. Mr Hastings asserts (p. 170) that 'during most of the time Price was writing *EBR* he was *literally* without a copy of *MHH* to refer to, and evidently wrote some parts from memory, intending to check his work later on. . . . Anticipating a second printing of *MHH*, he had disposed of all his own copies of this work only to find that there was to be no reprinting after all'. If this unlikely story had any foundation in fact, what was to prevent Price from borrowing the book from one of his friends? An obvious source would have been the Glanville family, with whom Price was closely acquainted and to whom he had presented several copies of *MHH*. The one inscribed by Price to Helen Glanville (now Mrs George Carter), for example, was generously re-inscribed and given by her to one of us in 1953. This talk of the unavailability to Price of a single copy of his own work is hardly worth discussion, however, when it is recalled (Mr Hastings surprisingly seems to be unaware of it) that *MHH* was in fact reprinted in March 1941. It can hardly be supposed that Price 'disposed of all his own copies' of this reissue as well.

In Appendix C Mr Hastings includes a long section by Dom Richard Whitehouse in which we are accused of omitting to mention the existence of certain 'notes' which he declared that he made when at Borley. We regret that in our examination of his testimony (*HBR*, pp. 98 etc.) we did not draw attention to these notes and in order to rectify this omission on our part we have asked Dom Richard to let us see them. But, although we enclosed a stamp, he has not had the courtesy even to reply to our letter. Since we have been unable to consult these notes and since Mrs Foyster has now denied any memory of certain of the most striking phenomena recorded by him,¹ we think that we may be justified in disregarding his statement and we intend to say nothing further about it. On the other hand, we must, we think, say something about the testimony of Major the Hon. Henry Douglas-Home. Mr Hastings has written a whole chapter on this witness, whom we quoted in various places in *HBR*. In discussing what Major Douglas-Home said we pointed out that some of his statements required elucidation, although we recognized that, having apparently made no notes at the time, his testimony could not be regarded in the same way as that of others. Indeed, Mr Hastings actually quotes the 'formidable objections' we made to some details in Major Douglas-Home's testimony, but concludes from his replies that there is 'no case to go to a jury'.

One reason why we quoted what Major Douglas-Home had to say about his visit to Borley was that he showed very clearly the impression that he had of Price. Mr Hastings has seen fit to follow us in not publishing what some of these impressions were, in spite of the fact that he assures his readers (p. 122) that they have seen Major Douglas-Home's case 'in its entirety'. We feel that the time has now come to disclose what some of these impressions were. 'Harry', he wrote, 'was one of the most plausible rascals' that he had ever met. He was, he said, 'a rogue and the more people realize it, the better for Truth's sake'. We can hardly suppose that a man with Major Douglas-Home's experience of the world had no reasons for calling Price also 'that Prince of Twisters' and expressing his approval of something being done 'to put right the false impression of that defunct charlatan'.

We have no intention here of mentioning, let alone discussing, other evidence in our possession regarding Price's untrustworthiness during the various investigations he conducted. But it might perhaps be useful if we ask our readers to recall the extraordinary series of incidents surrounding Price's alleged 'exposure' of Rudi

¹ See T. H. Hall, *New Light on Old Ghosts* (London, 1965), p. 131.

Schneider in April 1932¹ and the photographic plate which Price maintained showed Rudi producing phenomena fraudulently. Price's conduct was criticized by Lord Charles Hope (*Proc. S.P.R.*, 1933, XLI, pp. 284 ff.) and by Dr E. Osty in the *Revue Métapsychique* (Avril 1933), the former asking 'what weight is now to be attached to any report, whether positive or negative in its conclusions, or any phenomena, produced under Mr Price's direction or control or recorded by him?' (op. cit., p. 291). Further light on this incident has recently been thrown by Mrs Anita Gregory, who read a paper on Rudi Schneider at the Eleventh Annual Convention of the Parapsychological Association at Freiburg in 1968. She stated that she had examined the actual plate used at the sitting in question and had submitted it to an expert for examination who had come to the conclusion that it was almost certainly a fake and that the stereograms showed clear evidence of retouching. 'Mr. Harry Price,' she adds, 'acted with complete lack of scruple towards Rudi Schneider'.

At the end of his paper Mr Hastings deals with Price's aims and suggests that the authors do not seem to have understood what he was intending to do and have criticized him for doing something else. Hoping to help the authors to rectify this misunderstanding, Mr Hastings quotes a letter from Price to Mr Foyster (p. 150) indicating exactly what was at the back of his mind. Mr Hastings points out that what Price said he hoped to do was to emulate *An Adventure*, the famous story of the visit of Miss Moberley and Miss Jourdain to Versailles. Mr Price, wrote Mr Hastings, 'copied this method of presentation almost to the letter', a procedure which Mr Hastings thoroughly approves. Now, let us see what one writer at least described as the method used by Miss Moberley and Miss Jourdain in *An Adventure*. He said,

Instead of analysing every incident in terms of normality, they began hunting for evidence which would support their magical hypothesis. Of course, they found it: for *ten years* they searched archives, examined original documents, delved into old books, asked questions. In ten years they had found what they wanted to find. . . . Having utilized this mass of evidence in support of their story, the ladies decided to publish.

The same writer, when examining Mr J. R. Sturge-Whiting's *The Mystery of Versailles* (London, 1937) commended him. He wrote, Mr Sturge-Whiting, who knew little or nothing about psychical research, attacked the story from a rationalistic angle. Instead of

¹ See *Bulletin IV* of the Nat. Lab. of Psychical Research, 1933, pp. 145 ff.

assuming that the various incidents . . . were miraculous, as did the authors, he assumed that they were normal and actually proved it. This he has succeeded in doing, incident by incident, and a perfectly rational solution to the mystery is the result. He has proved that if the heroines of the Versailles adventure had devoted more time in trying to rationalize what they saw instead of spending ten years seeking evidence to support their belief in a miracle, the book would never have been written. . . . Mr Sturge-Whiting has proved that faulty perception, lapses of memory, an irresistible subconscious urge to accept a super-normal explanation of an occurrence when a normal one was available, plus a certain credulity and subconscious elaboration, are the real reason why we ever heard of the 'adventure' at all.

The author of both these passages was Harry Price (*Fifty Years of Psychical Research* (London: Longmans Green & Co. Ltd., 1939, pp. 281-2). Could Mr Hastings, if he had tried his hardest, have chosen a more unfortunate comparison? But how well it fits Price's methods at Borley!

In conclusion, it may perhaps again be mentioned that Mr Hastings has made no attempt to discuss the three choices we offered the reader on p. 74 of *HBR*. There we said that either Price during his visits to the Smiths, aided by others, engaged in various kinds of trickery, *or* Price was the innocent victim of the trickery of others (such, for example, as the 'apport' of the St Ignatius medal) which he failed to detect, *or* the phenomena were genuine and *only* took on new and violent forms on Price's arrival. It must be remembered that the Bulls stated that 'no objective phenomena of any kind' had been heard of by them during the whole of their lives when living at the Rectory (*HBR*, p. 24).¹ It is suggestive that Mr Hastings has refrained from discussing these remarkable facts as is also the case regarding his omission of any mention of Canon H. Lawton's testimony (*HBR*, pp. 108 etc.). Similarly, Mr Hastings is silent on the testimony of the Rev. S. E. Pennefather, which was abruptly brushed aside by Price and which, with the evidence of Canon Lawton, is highly relevant in the story of the haunting of Borley Rectory. Indeed, these omissions illustrate clearly the true nature of Mr Hastings' criticisms. He has merely selected a few incidents from the massive material collected by the authors and offers a series of observations which he thinks may influence the minds of readers who have not read the voluminous literature on the haunt. Whether he has been successful or not must be left to the judgment of the reader. For ourselves we do not propose to continue the controversy any further.

¹ But see *MHH*, pp. 45-6.